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ABSTRACT

"Planned", "artificial", or "formal" mentoring of students at risk of dropping out of high school has become an important component of many school systems over the past few years. Mentoring of at risk students appears to have originated in the United States in the 1980's. In Canada, at risk student mentoring programs have grown substantially in the past few years. The diverse use of the term "mentoring" has concerned a number of researchers and practitioners in the field, who note that the term is used for such a broad set of activities and objectives that it may become meaningless. The link between mentoring program and results--while promising--has not yet been definitely shown by available research. Implementation of planned mentoring, in trying to replicate the 'magic' of natural relationships, often runs into logistical snags. The programs often exist in a sort of administrative limbo and are often financially fragile. Recent research suggests that in contrast to earlier expectations, mentoring should be thought of as modest interventions given the number of limitations facing programs. Results of these newer innovations will not be known for some years. A great deal more needs to be done before the true picture of mentoring is seen. Contains 63 references. (JBJ)

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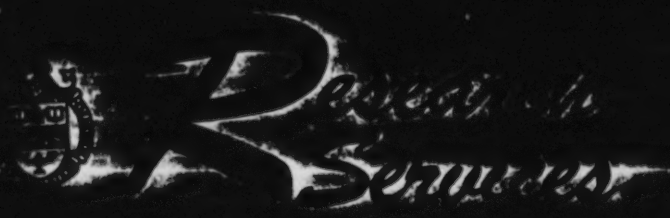
Mentoring At-Risk Students: Challenges and Potential



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Mentoring At Risk Students: Challenges and Potential

October 1995

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Executive Summary

"Planned", "artificial", or "formal" mentoring of students at risk of dropping out of high school (that is, the planned matching of a mentor and mentee, as opposed to natural mentoring) has become an important component of many school systems over the past few years. While natural mentoring has always existed in one form or another, the widespread use of planned mentoring programs has blossomed only in the past two decades, in the corporate world and then in other areas, including nursing, teacher training, and gifted students. Mentoring of at risk students appears to have originated in the United States in the 1980's, partly because of disappointment with previous antipoverty efforts, and a concern about a decline in well-being of American youth. In Canada, at risk student mentoring programs have grown substantially in the past few years.

The diverse use of the term "mentoring" has concerned a number of researchers and practitioners in the field, who note that the term is used for such a broad set of activities and objectives that it may become meaningless. An examination of business, teacher, gifted student, and at risk student programs in terms of program outcomes (self-actualization, learning outcomes, retention, behavior outcomes, equity outcomes, and advantages to mentors) indeed reveals that referring to all these programs as 'mentoring' may be harmful, in that educators may think they are talking about the same type of program when in fact they are referring to very different ones.

Many educators have great enthusiasm about mentoring, and mentoring has produced memorable successes. The link between mentoring program and results-- while promising-- has not yet been definitely shown by available research. This may be because there are so many types of pairing strategies, and present research is so limited, that it is difficult to derive any sort conclusion on what works and what does not. Also, mentoring (of whatever variety) is rarely a stand-alone 'program' but is normally one component of a multiple intervention strategy. As a result, it is difficult to conclude from the current literature which types of pairings work best, and what the optimal conditions for program success are.

Implementation of planned mentoring, in trying to replicate the 'magic' of natural relationships, often runs into logistical snags. Successful programs therefore require staff (whether volunteer, paid, or both) to provide the organizational structure needed to organize, and then maintain, pairings. Even under optimal conditions, the lack of social or emotional compatibility may prevent pairings from developing beyond rudimentary stages: all in all, research indicates that half or more of pairings never work. The programs often exist in a sort of administrative limbo and are often financially fragile.

It is possible to see in more recent writings a modification on what mentorship is thought to be, what a 'second generation' of mentoring programs may look like. In contrast to earlier (perhaps unrealistic) expectations, those who have done detailed work on the subject have cautioned that mentoring of at risk students should be thought as *modest* interventions, given the organizational challenges of programs, and the imposing challenge of social forces at work in students' lives. Also, given the limitations of matching mentors and mentees, some practitioners and researchers have re-examined the ideal of one mentor matched to one mentee.

Results of these newer innovations in mentoring will not be known for some years. At this time, the apparent simplicity of the concept of 'mentoring' at risk students may disguise the enormous complexity of its application; a great deal more needs to be done before we can begin to see the "true picture".

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1. Background

Mentoring of youth and adults has been defined as

> a sustained relationship between a youth and an adult. Through continued involvement, the adult offers support, guidance, and assistance as the younger person goes through a difficult period, faces new challenges, or works to correct earlier problems. In particular, where parents are either unavailable or unable to provide responsible guidance for their children, mentors can play a critical role. (Floyd, 1993)

"Planned", "artificial", or "formal" mentoring of students at risk of dropping out of high school (that is, the planned matching of a mentor and mentee, as opposed to natural mentoring)[1] has become an important component of many school systems over the past few years. According to Hamilton and Hamilton (1992),

> Mentoring has strong common sense appeal. Adults who feel helpless in the face of complex economic and social problems can make a tangible contribution by working with a single young person. And adults who remember someone important to them while they were growing up often wish to play such a role in a young person's life.

The literature on mentoring programs will often give literary and historical precursors from antiquity, most notably the tale of Mentor and Telemachus from *The Odyssey*. Most of these references are quite doubtful (see the Appendix for a brief discussion of this). While "natural" mentoring has always existed in one form or another, the widespread use of planned mentoring programs has blossomed only in the past two decades.

Modern planned mentoring programs started in the corporate world in the late 1970's. In 1978, a *Harvard Business Review* article, "Everyone Who Makes It Has A Mentor", (Collins and Scott, 1978) "described and glorified" mentorship in profiling three male executives (Freedman, 1992). According to Flaxman (1988), this article "was a clarion call for mentoring in organizations that has also been heard in many other institutions--schools, colleges, prisons, and community organizations".[2] Another study published in the *Harvard Business Review* (Roche, 1979) provided quantitative evidence for business mentoring. Results of a questionnaire completed by 1,250 American executives found that "mentor and protégé relationships are fairly extensive among the elite of the business

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[1] To quote Floyd (1993): "Natural mentoring occurs through friendship, collegiality, teaching, coaching, and counseling. In contrast, planned mentoring occurs through structured programs in which mentors and participants are selected and matched through formal processes."

[2] The three executives-- F.J. Lunding, G.L. Clements, and D.S. Perkins-- were successive chairmen of the Jewel Companies, a food chain. Each chairman had been mentored as a young man by the previous chairman. The article is as much on issues of executive succession as it is on mentoring. The title comes from a quote from Donald Perkins, at that time Chairman of Jewel: "I don't know that anyone has ever succeeded in any business without having some unselfish sponsorship or mentorship, whatever it might have been called. Everyone who succeeds has had a mentor or mentors. We've all been helped. For some the help comes with more warmth than for others, and with some it's been done with more forethought, but most people who succeed in a business will remember fondly individuals who helped them in their early days."

world". Specifically, two thirds of the respondents reported having a mentor or sponsor, and one-third had two or more. Those who had mentors reported being happier with their career progress and derived somewhat greater pleasure from their work.[3]

At about the same time, a study of American Nobel prize winners in science found that more than half of these laureates had "apprenticed" at one time under other laureates, and many of the others had studied under individuals (like Robert Oppenheimer) who did not win the prize but were considered to have done equivalent-quality work (Zuckerman, 1977; see Haensly and Parsons, 1993). Levinson et al. (1978) provided a psychological basis for mentoring, in describing a mentor as a transitional figure who helped the mid-life transition from early to middle adulthood (Monaghan, 1992).[4]

The idea of using planned mentoring programs came at a time when business organizations were dealing with several related issues. Women and racial minority groups were entering managerial ranks in increased numbers, but did not have the 'natural' male mentoring connections; there was a perceived "glass ceiling" for women rising in the corporate hierarchies[5]; and there was a perceived high turnover in young executives in their early career stages. Formal mentoring programs were then established with the purposes of orienting individuals to organizational operations and of aiding in career advancement. (Freedman, 1992; Gaskill, 1993.) Mentoring programs have since

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[3] It is interesting that while Roche's study has been widely quoted for its 'quantitative' support of mentoring, the methodology had limitations. First, the sample came from all executives who had new responsibilities reported in the Wall Street Journal in 1977-- in other words, they started a new executive-level job in a new company or were promoted or took up a new executive role within their company. Thus, this was not a study of *all* executives but of *mobile* executives, and thus will be give somewhat different results than would a sample of all executives. More importantly, the return rate of 31% is low enough that one should have reservations about the representativeness of the sample: i.e., it is quite possible that those who had mentoring experiences would be more likely to respond than those who had no mentoring experiences or negative experiences.

[4] Levinson et al.'s study examined male, and mostly white professionals. They described the natural mentoring relationship as "one of the most complex, and developmentally important, a man can have in early adulthood." The study noted that a mentor is usually older than his protégé by 8 to 15 years. The mentor has several functions: to serve as a teacher, as a sponsor to facilitate entry into work; as a host and guide, "welcoming the initiate into a new occupational and social world and acquainting him with its values, customs, resources, and characters." Developmentally, the mentor serves as a support and facilitator of the portage's goals and "Dream". Levinson et al. make it clear the mentor is not a parent, but a transitional figure in the shift between being a child in relation to parental adults to being an adult in a peer relationship with other adults. Levinson et al thought that mentoring should be best understood as a form of love relationship-- and as result, difficult to terminate in a reasonable, civil manner. Most such relationships were thought to last 2-3 years on average, 8 years at most-- and most intense mentor relationships would end with "strong conflict and bad feelings on both sides".

[5] One influential study was Kanter's *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977), which looked at corporate 'sponsors', teachers and coaches in higher levels of management who also provide influence and access to power. "If sponsors are important for the success of men in organizations, they seem absolutely essential for women."

become widespread in other areas, including nursing, teacher training, and gifted students (Monaghan, 1992; Cheng and Brown, 1992; Slicker and Palmer, 1993).

Mentoring of At Risk Students

Planned mentoring programs for students at risk of dropping out started to become prevalent in the 1980's. Although mentoring programs for at risk students tend to be grounded in the philosophy and research base of business, teacher and other recent mentoring programs, they actually have a longer history. Freedman (1992) has shown how the Friendly Visiting Movement in the United States sprung up in response to class and social tensions of the late nineteenth century. Friendly Visiting relied on a corps of middle-class volunteers, supplemented by paid staff, whose goal was to raise the moral character of the poor. The focus was on the Friendly Visitor being a role model for the poor, using the vehicle of a personal relationship. After a great start of enthusiasm, the movement faltered and collapsed by the beginning of the twentieth century. The Friendly Visitor program was then forgotten, and had no influence in the evolution of mentoring, until Freedman drew upon its story as an example of what can happen to mentoring programs if they emphasize "fervor" at the expense of program infrastructure.

A successor to the Friendly Visitor movement was Big Brothers (later Big Brothers/Big Sisters), founded in 1904. The organization again relied on the relationship of an older person from the middle class to make a difference in the life of a disadvantaged young person. Founded originally with broad guidelines, the organization became increasingly specific in its matching regulations. As a result, Freedman concludes that "the mentoring movement has grown up partly in response to the limitations of Big Brothers/Big Sisters: its inability to serve larger numbers of disadvantaged youth and a recruitment process that some observers believe is too rigid, thereby discouraging many potential adult volunteers" (Freedman, 1992.)[6]

According to Flaxman and Ascher (1992) American at risk mentoring programs originated in the 1980's because the antipoverty efforts of previous decades, such as Head Start, Title I and Chapter 1, were viewed as only marginally successful in forestalling academic failure or dropping out of school, or making youth employable for anything but low-level jobs. There was also a concern about a decline in the well-being of American youth: while all youth were thought at risk of growing up without good or abundant adult influences, some were clearly more at risk than others. In the model of earlier antipoverty efforts, youths were either considered deficient in some way, or harmless victims of a society structured to limit their opportunities.

These programs "either provided an array of compensatory learning and services, or tried to eliminate barriers to the youth's advancement through the courts and legislation"; yet

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[6]Another interpretation is that Big Brothers/Big Sisters did not *call itself* a mentoring program, or use the terminology of mentoring, when mentoring was first becoming a widespread innovation in business and other organizational structures. The origin of mentoring programs was, after all, in the human resources side of adult organizations, and came into education through teacher and principal mentoring, and mentoring for gifted students. The similarities to what Big Brother/Big Sister was doing may not have been readily apparent at first. There is very little on the subject and it deserves further study.

"these interventions could not account for the fact that these youth were complex physical, psychological, and social beings in environments and institutions over which they felt they had little control." In contrast, mentoring would bypass "the scientism and technicism of many educational and social programs, which appear remote from lived experiences. In this, it has appeared to be a sensible and socially moral response to the difficulty of growing up in the United States today" (Flaxman and Ascher, 1992).

Mentoring programs are distinctive from previous programs in that they involve the partnership of some very diverse groups, working with the educational system (normally, school boards or individual schools). The private sector (usually but not exclusively larger corporations) has taken a leadership role in funding programs, possibly because executives are familiar with corporate mentoring; also, unlike other anti-poverty efforts, mentoring is volunteeristic in its ethos (Flaxman and Ascher, 1992).[7] In one case the Pepsi-Cola Company set up a pilot program in Dallas and Detroit, targeting inner-city schools with high dropout rates. Students were given financial incentives to complete their high school education, and funding was provided for a teacher mentor program (Punsalan, 1993).

At the same time, activists within the African-American and Latino communities have become vocal advocates of mentoring.

> To them mentoring is a buffer against the threat of social nihilism, a way of reviving the family and community networks that in the past have sustained the community against external and internal threats....To the minority community the renewal of institutions to help the youth is also a way of nurturing future leaders, who are in danger of being lost without help. (Flaxman and Ascher, 1992.)

An example is 100 Black Men of Atlanta, a community service organization, which targeted a high school in Atlanta with a high dropout rate. It promised students that if they stayed in school and entered college, their college education would be paid for. Members of the organization also tutored the students, and served as their mentors (Glass, 1991).

In Canada, mentoring of at risk students has grown in the past few years. *Enter Mentor: A Program Guide* for mentors (put out by the Canadian Stay in School Initiative) gives 12 examples of Canadian mentoring programs (Baran, 1992). In August 1994, the Metropolitan Toronto Learning Partnership hosted a group of people involved in mentoring programs of at risk students. Among the programs represented were:

- Prime Mentors-- an enrichment program for elementary high-risk creative youth;
- Big Brothers-- matching men to boys in single parent families;
- Seniors Independence Program-- matching adults with at risk youth in Scarborough, Toronto, and North York;
- Volunteer Grandparents-- linking "grandparents" to 2-6 year olds
- Community Mentoring-- community volunteers acting as mentors in North York schools (Reichl, 1994).
- Toronto Intergenerational Project-- a pilot project linking seniors with elementary students identified as at risk. (The Reichl Group, 1994.)

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[7] The Metropolitan Toronto Learning Partnership, a joint business-school board organization examining the educational system, has a mentoring committee.

2. What Is Mentoring Supposed To Do? At Risk and Other Program Outcomes Examined

Perhaps because planned mentoring is such a recent innovation, and has been used in such widely varied situations as corporate boardrooms and inner-city elementary schools, the term appears to be used in contexts that, on the face of it, have little in common. Take two definitions, both from recent articles with the word "mentoring" in the title:

> Formal mentoring programs have been in existence in the public and private sector for the past decade...with the purpose of orienting individuals to organizational operations and aiding in career advancement (Gaskill, 1993, on business mentoring).
>
> Mentoring is a strategy for teaching and coaching, for strengthening character, improving racial harmony, promoting social change, assuring total quality education for all, and creating opportunities for personal empowerment (White-Hood, 1993, on mentoring high school students).

This diverse use of "mentoring" has concerned a number of researchers and practitioners, e.g. Jacobi (1991):

> The literature offers numerous definitions, some of which conflict, so that empirical research about mentoring subsumes several distinct kinds of interpersonal relationships. Further, descriptions of mentoring programs are so diverse that one wonders if they have anything at all in common beyond a sincere desire to help students succeed. The result of this definitional vagueness is a continued lack of clarity about the antecedents, outcomes, characteristics, and mediators of mentoring relationships despite a growing body of empirical research.

Jacobi produced a table of 15 different definitions of mentoring derived from higher education, business management, and psychology. As Freedman and Jaffe (1993) cautioned,

> Mentoring is threatening to become a buzzword without meaning. We hear about mentoring for principals, for teachers, for students, for employees in a wide range of business and industry. There is mentoring by principals, by teachers, by students, by corporate executives, by members of the community. There is mentoring designed to help adult "mentees" (an ungraceful word) be better administrators, teachers, practitioners, or employees; to help youth adjust to society after incarceration or institutionalization; to do better in school, take good care of their children, not get pregnant in the first place, stay out of jail, stop taking drugs--and on and on.

One might think that mentoring programs for at risk students would have more of a focus, considering that their purpose, by definition, would be to lower the dropout rate. In fact, the mandates of at risk programs are as varied as those of business, teacher, and gifted student programs. This can be seen below, by examining examples of these programs and comparing their objectives with those of at-risk programs.

a. Self-Actualization

Haensly and Parsons (1993) describe mentoring psychology as it has been developed since Levinson et al. (1978). Enhancement of self-concept, self-esteem, and self-confidence are particularly evident outcomes of mentorship. Ideally, mentoring brings about "a dynamic

synergism between creativity, intellectual accomplishment, and individual independence and autonomy". The role of the mentor is to steer the individual's progress towards self-identification, towards particular accomplishments, and eventually to autonomous self-realization.

A number of mentoring programs in business, teaching and with gifted students have described their goals in terms of psychological self-actualization (e.g. Monaghan, 1992; Backes, 1992). However, this is virtually absent in discussion of goals for at risk students. These programs instead will often aim for increased self-esteem and/or self-confidence (e.g. White-Hood, 1993), but usually the enhanced self-esteem is the means to an end-- i.e., if a student has increased self-confidence, s/he is more likely to have the motivation to do well in school work and not drop out of school[8]. All twelve Canadian programs profiled in the Stay in School Initiative's *Enter Mentor* guide had improved self-concept or improved attitudes towards school as goals (Baran, 1992).

b. Learning Outcomes

Outside of at risk programs, most mentor programs have some sort of specific learning outcome: e.g. knowledge of an organization and of 'networking connections' for business; beginning teacher 'survival skills' in coping with classroom and school organizations for the first time (Gaskill, 1993; Cheng and Brown, 1992). An example of a mentoring program for gifted students is that found in Sartell High School in Minnesota, where it was thought that the mentoring experience could be especially effective for gifted students whose needs were outside the boundaries of the standard high school curriculum. Each unique mentorship experience was centered around the students' self-selected, semi-independent project, which involved opportunities for students to observe and work directly with their mentors. A weekly seminar allowed students to develop critical thinking skills, share their work in progress with peers, and interact with the instructor regarding progress on their projects. Mentorship projects at Sartell High School included work in retail advertising, case study in civil law, radio broadcasting, newspaper reporting, creative writing, surgical medicine, elementary and secondary education, accounting, therapeutic sports medicine, family law, family genetic research, and other experimental projects.

> Mentors are professionals in those areas who will teach, advise, and inspire a student with similar interests. Follow-up research found that over three quarters of students pursued their mentorship profession or vocation after high school graduation (Backes, 1992).

However, these sorts of detailed learning goals are rarely found in at risk programs. One exception was the Morgan Undergraduate Chemist Help (MUCH) program, which paired undergraduate chemistry students with inner-city elementary students. The MUCH program

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[8] Emphasis on increased confidence is also present in other types of mentoring programs-- also as a means to an end. For example, the Toronto Board of Education's elementary teacher mentoring program had as a goal the greater increase in self-perception of competence among menteed new teachers. It was reasoned that this would contribute to interest in continuing as a teacher (Cheng and Brown, 1992).

> strives to excite the youngsters about science in order to arouse their intellectual curiosity, to develop in them an appreciation for science, to assist them in beginning to apply the scientific method to their environment, to inform them of the various career options open to science graduates, and to apprise them of the many contributions of minority scientists to society in general (Shaw, Waweru and Stevenson, 1993).

Yet on the whole, while at risk programs may have 'learning' as a general objective, specific skill or learning objectives are not often formulated, at least in examples available in the literature.

c. Retention

Most mentor programs of all sorts have one important goal: that the participants continue to belong to whatever organization the program takes place in. This is usually portrayed as "achievement" but in fact it is continued survival within the organization. In business, programs targeted at women, minorities or young executives are intended to keep participants from leaving the corporation or the profession (Gaskill, 1992). A program for new elementary teachers had as its goal the continuation of mentees in teaching beyond a two year period, because the turnover of new teachers is quite high in the first years in the profession (Cheng and Brown, 1992).

Many at risk mentor programs likewise have academic survival of students as their primary goal, usually stated as either graduation from high school, or continuation into post-secondary school. It is not a universally *stated* goal. Of the twelve secondary-level programs profiled in *Enter Mentor*, only two had retention as an objective. The others had increased self-esteem, improved attitudes towards school, and improved academic performance (Baran, 1992). These are objectives that appear to *assume* retention through their achievement-- i.e. that improved self-esteem, attitudes towards school and academic performance would lead to improved graduation and declining dropout.

d. Behavior Outcomes

At risk mentoring programs diverge from other types of programs in that many at risk program goals relate to modification of existing behavior, primarily in class attendance. Numerous projects, such as Project RAISE (McPartland and Nettles, 1991) and the Florida secondary school program described by Laughren (1990) describe a primary goal as that of increased attendance: that is, the relationship of mentor and mentee should result in increased attendance in class by the mentee . Increased attendance is thought to lead to higher marks, fewer course failures, and better student learning.[9]

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[9] McPartland and Nettles describe the close relationship between attendance and marks that is at the heart of this goal:

> Good school attendance can often be a building block to other student behaviors required for school success. Students' attendance rates are often closely tied to their school report card grades, because many teachers will mark down students who have higher absenteeism levels than the rest of the class and some teachers will automatically fail students who have missed a significant portion of the term. Course failures due to poor attendance can lead to higher retention rates. Student learning as measured by standardized test scores can also be expected

This type of goal appears to be absent from teacher, business, and gifted student mentoring programs, since they rarely assume that there are behaviors that need to be modified. For example, a new teacher mentoring program may provide moral support for the teacher in his/her first year or years in teaching, and the mentor may also be the means through which the new teacher is able to learn new and necessary skills-- from techniques for dealing with behavioral problems, to instructions on how to use the photocopier. There is not an assumption that the new teacher possesses behaviors that need to be corrected if the teacher is to have a successful career. At risk mentor programs, then, attempt to *modify* behaviors and skills; other mentor programs are *supplemental* to already existing behaviors and skills.

e. Equity Outcomes

Mentoring programs for at risk students often have an equity outcome in mind, in that at risk status is strongly linked to socio-economic status: a program trying to reduce the dropout rate can therefore be seen as "improving racial harmony" and "addressing social change", to use White-Hood's words (White-Hood, 1993). Even so, some program descriptions do not make this link, e.g. those in the Stay In School Initiative's *Enter Mentor* program guide (Baran, 1992).

Equity is often an *indirect* outcome of other types of mentoring programs. Business and education organizations have for the past few years been adjusting their hiring practices to increase the proportion of traditionally underrepresented ethnic and racial groups in their workforces. Mentoring programs for business and education professionals, in that they are intended to help new employees adjust to both formal and informal aspects of organizations, can be seen in supporting equity goals. It is for the most part an indirect equity support, because the mentoring resources are usually available to all new employees, regardless of race, gender or ethnicity. (There are some mentoring programs for specific groups, such as female education executives.) (Gaskill, 1993; Lynch, 1993.)

f. Advantages to Mentors

Most mentoring programs have the (sometimes unstated) assumption that a mentoring relationship should be two-sided-- that the program is not truly successful unless mentors as well as mentees get some sort of satisfaction or learning achievement. This is often considered to be a societal benefit: the satisfaction of giving something back to society, or the chance to make a difference in someone's life (e.g. Freedman and Jaffe, 1993; Cheng and Brown, 1992). There is an additional goal in at risk mentoring programs: education of mentors about the challenge of growing up as a socially disadvantaged youth in today's society. As Freedman (1992) has noted, "privately, program sponsors admit that a central point of their mission is alerting middle class adults to the circumstances of poor children and re-engaging them." This sometimes covert outcome is not a component of

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to suffer as a result of poor attendance, because absent students will miss instruction and engage in less drill and practice in the basic skills covered by tests. So a program of assistance by outside adults that focuses on improving student attendance may have a cumulative effect over time on other academic outcomes.

other mentoring programs, because those programs rarely have noticeable social gaps between mentors and mentees.[10]

Is Mentoring An Example of False Clarity?

It should be obvious from the above description that the goals of mentoring programs are by no means identical, and the successful achievement of one type of mentoring program will not mean the successful achievement of another. In particular, the goals of at risk mentoring are rather different than the goals of other types of mentoring. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) use the term *false clarity* to describe the practice of interpreting change (such as a new educational program) in an oversimplified way: the proposed change has more to it than people realize. A variety of false clarity may be at work in the grouping of many types of programs under the name 'mentoring'. Most university-educated people involved in business, education, and other organizations appear to be familiar with the concept of what a mentor does[11]. Yet the "common sense appeal" of mentoring may disguise so varied a set of strategies, fields, and outcomes, as to be potentially very misleading.

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[10] In the teaching profession, it is possible that a higher proportion of mentees may be from 'middle class' backgrounds than mentors, assuming that mentees are younger and mentors are older teachers. According to King and Pearlt (1992) teachers 30 years of age or younger are more likely to come from white collar and professional backgrounds than their older colleagues.

[11] Flaxman, Ascher and Harrington (1988) caution that the concept of mentoring is not as obvious to the disadvantaged youth that most at risk programs target, and that a certain amount of education is necessary.

3 How Effective Is Planned Mentoring of At Risk Students?

Freedman (1992) notes that the mentoring movement has relied upon examples of "heroic" mentoring interventions. He gives the example of Sean Varner and his mentor, Dr. John Hogan of Washington D.C. Varner's family lived in a shelter for the homeless; he was failing school and considering dropping out. Yet, with the assistance of Dr. Hogan, Varner completed high school with among the highest marks in his school, and was being courted by several colleges. Varner's story-- profiled in several newspapers-- and others like it were used to construct what Freedman calls a "mythology" about what mentoring can do.

Nonetheless, a number of comprehensive reviews of mentoring at risk students have cautioned that at this point there has been little 'rigorous' research on mentoring-- i.e., evaluations using pre-test and post-test measures, with a control group and experimental group. Flaxman (1992) listed two evaluations that satisfied these criteria. Career Beginnings was a program with a mentoring component that was designed to assist "tenacious" high school juniors from low-income families to complete high school and be admitted to college, or, for non-college bound youth, to find jobs that develop their abilities. Evaluation of the program showed that participants were more likely to attend college and have higher educational aspirations than the controls. The evaluation of Project RAISE, a mentoring intervention aimed at middle school high-risk students, found that Project RAISE students were more likely than control students to improve attendance and English grades, but not their promotion rates or scores on standardized tests. (Flaxman, 1992; McPartland and Nettles, 1991.)

There are other, less methodologically rigorous evaluations and studies that show positive results of mentoring programs. Freedman and Jaffe (1993) concluded that pairing older adults with children resulted in significant relationships that provided benefits to both partners. In an evaluation of the Toronto Board's Change Your Future program, which had a mentoring component, students in the program had lower dropout rates and transfer rates, and somewhat higher credit accumulation, than comparable students not in the program (Brown, 1994). Laughrey (1990) in his evaluation of a Florida high school mentoring program, found that students improved in the areas of attendance, test results, and post graduation planning.

The lack of substantive research evidence may be related to methodological limitations in "proving" links of this sort. Jacobi (1991) in a review of literature on mentoring of undergraduate university students and academic success, found a similar lack of empirical studies linking mentoring and academic outcomes; furthermore, "the few empirical studies that have been published tend to be fraught with methodological weaknesses that seriously limit both internal and external validity". However, she noted that research design and measurement issues challenge the study of mentoring. Much of the current research "fails, for the most part, to either control for potentially confounding factors or eliminate alternative explanations for observed effects." She believed that future research should focus on quasi-experimental designs that include cross-sectional and longitudinal components (including measurements at multiple intervals of time, rather than simple pre and post-test designs), and that students should be compared not only to unmentored

students but to students participating in other kinds of planned interventions designed to promote academic success. Yet Jacobi concluded that even using quasi-experimental designs, mentoring research will still be subject to serious confounding errors, including:

- challenges in controlling for sampling and self-selection biases, because mentoring is based on systemic, rather than random, selection;
- the fact that research is usually based on self-report rather than observation;
- potentially low levels of external validity, because research is usually based on data collected within a single institution, and sometimes from students of one gender or ethnicity, making it difficult to generalize to other institutions and students.

Although Jacobi was discussing university mentoring programs, these limitations also apply to research on at-risk elementary and secondary students.

While researchers are not able to provide a proven link, many practicing educators are convinced of the effectiveness of mentoring. A study conducted by NAPE (National Association of Partners in Education) compiled a list of 78 "exemplar" dropout prevention programs. The criteria for inclusion on the list were:

- evidence of impact on dropout prevention and positive outcomes related to partnership goals and costs;
- substance, uniqueness and creativity of partnership involvement;
- potential for replication;
- longevity, partnership stability, institutionalization beyond original funding; and
- endorsements (awards and local, state or national recognition).

The most frequent focus of the programs was academic improvement (67%) but mentoring was the second most frequent focus: 59% of exemplar programs included some form of mentoring (Reichl, 1994).

Another question is not *whether* mentoring is effective, but the *degree* of its effectiveness. Researchers and practitioners such as Flaxman (1992) and Freedman (1992) have cautioned against inflating the extent to which mentoring will 'make a difference'. In evaluations by McPartland and Nettles (1991) and Laughrey (1990) student improvements were not up to expectations established at the beginning of the program. While McPartland and Nettles found that the mentoring program evaluated had potential for improving attendance, the effects were not yet powerful enough to increase average attendance to "desirable rates". Laughrey (1990) found that academic performance was improved, but not as highly as original program goals intended. He believed that this might have been because the expectation of improvement was unrealistic.

These results indicate that mentoring has the capability to improve student success, but should be thought of as "a useful but modest approach for addressing students' needs" (McPartland and Nettles, 1991), which Freedman echoes in his description of mentoring as a "modest intervention" (Freedman, 1992).

4. Challenges of Mentoring Programs for At Risk Students

a. Matching of Mentor and Mentee

The power of a mentoring relationship is usually ascribed to the success of achieving the "right" match between mentor and mentee. This can be a rather complex process, considering the possible permutations of possible relationships. Depending on the program a mentor can be a senior citizen; a teacher or member of support staff; an undergraduate student; or even a senior high school student. Mentees can range from elementary school to senior high school. For example, Freedman and Jaffe (1993) described a program of senior citizens (or "elder mentors") working with at risk youth. Salz and Trumowitz (1992) examined a mentoring program that paired undergraduate students ("Big Buddies") with homeless children. Fehr (1993) profiled a mentoring program of faculty and staff working with at risk students in an American middle school.

Perhaps because of the enormous range of mentoring matches, consistent and verified methods of linking mentors and mentees have not as yet been developed. Flaxman and Ascher (1992) found that program administrators will often use intuition for selection (they also observed that this appears to be more effective than many 'scientific' but crude assessment instruments currently available). Regardless of what method is used, the failure rate of matches is high. Hamilton and Hamilton (1992) found that even with a thorough process of matching, only about half the pairs actually met regularly. Freedman (1992) concluded that up to two thirds of mentoring relationships do not take hold.[12]

Cross-gender and cross-ethnic mentoring is an area that is cause for concern. Most of the studies on 'natural' mentoring that served as the inspiration for mentoring programs examined mentoring between white males. There is little in the historical record to provide guidance on women mentoring men, for example, or Whites mentoring Blacks. Program organizers usually suggest that, where possible, mentoring should be between people of similar social origins (Freedman, 1992). Yet in the world of schools and at risk students, the demographics of mentors and mentees rarely coincide. Most of the potential mentors are middle class; many of the mentees are not.

Mentoring is popularly supposed to be a one-to-one relationship. However, Flaxman and Ascher (1992) found that the one-to-one ratio often was more of an ideal than actual

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[12] It may be worth noting that when Zuckerman (1977) found that most American Nobel laureates had "apprenticed" under other laureates, she also found an very detailed (albeit unofficial) process of mutual selection, starting when students seek out institutions of reputation for their undergraduate study, and ending in the matching of student and master during the students' postdoctoral study. "The filiation of laureates can thus be thought of as the result of mutual search by young scientists of promise and by their prospective masters. Both apprentices and masters were engaged in a motivated search to find and then to work with scientists of talent". Thus, one of the most-quoted affirmations of the effectiveness of mentoring also shows the mentoring relationship to be the end result of a detailed matching process. See "The Process of Mutual Search", in Chapter 4, "Masters and Apprentices in Science". In some ways Zuckerman's description of the environment of mutual selection of elite science researchers resembles the "mentor-rich environment" proposed by Freedman (1992) below.

achievement. "These practitioners share the national ideal voiced by many public officials of 'a mentor for every youth'. That this may be achievable only through group activities and occasional personal contacts, rather than an idealized personal relationship, does not dampen their enthusiasm and commitment". There are mentoring programs designed with either multiple mentors or multiple mentees. In one Florida high school, at risk Black male students were paired with two mentors: Black male community based mentors and in-school volunteer faculty members (usually non-Black). (Laughrey, 1990.)

An important reason for multiple mentors has been presented by Freedman (1992). Freedman suggested creating "mentor-rich environments" in schools, where students have the opportunity to establish close ties with teachers, coaches, supervisors, youthworkers, counselors, social workers and other adults who have the time and inclination to establish close ties with young people.

> Young people exposed to mentor-ish settings might well be in position to avoid many of the vicissitudes of formal, matched, volunteer mentoring.... would find ample opportunities for natural mentoring. In such settings, young people are in a position to select the right mentor at the right time, pick mentors for different reasons and experience mentoring from a variety of sources. In the process, youth might encounter a mix of primary and secondary relationships, with some providing the "master key" and others affording discrete types of help...

There is evidence that some newer programs are going in their direction. The Community Action Partnerships in Service Learning (CAPSL) which will be implemented in the Toronto Board in Fall 1995, will use "community mentor teams" of 4-5 mentors who will "advise, guide, and interact" with students in Grade 5-6 classes. In this program, as well as others starting or being planned in Kansas City, Missouri, and Metropolitan Toronto, mentors and protégés are not matched prior to the program, but rather are put together in environments where such matches can take place naturally. (Goals and Objectives of CAPSL, May, 1995; Minutes of the Mentoring Sub-Committee, Ontario Learning Partnership, June 1995.)

Another variation of multiple mentors is the use of a peer group of at risk students supplemented by one-to-one mentoring by an adult or older student. The peer group supports and adds to the mentoring process. This system was used in the REACH program, where a one-on-one relationship with volunteer school personnel was supplemented by a peer support group that met weekly (Blum and Jones, 1993). A similar process was employed in the Toronto Board's Change Your Future program for visible minority at risk students, with a Change Your Future counselor having mentoring functions that were supplemented by a weekly peer support meeting (Brown, 1994). Laughrey (1990) found that peer support by mentored students was an unintended but powerful effect of the Florida program for Black male high school students that he studied. "Besides motivating one another, policing each others' behavior, and developing lines of communication, they also became the "in-group" with their own peers. Throughout the project, other Black male students were expressing an interest to be part of the group and asking for the same assistance the mentees were receiving."

b. Frequency and Duration of Meeting

Research on natural mentoring has suggested that it is over daily contacts of between two and eight years that "the rich, complicated mentoring relationships of those individual who become successful take place" (Flaxman, Ascher and Harrington, 1988). However, most planned mentoring programs take place over a period of a summer, or an academic year. There are no agreed-upon standards for duration and frequency of meeting between mentor and mentee. The mentoring program studied by Hamilton and Hamilton (1992) targeted two or three meetings per month. In fact most pairs met far less frequently than that. Barriers to meetings included schedule conflicts, time constraints, transportation problems, communication problems (most frequently unreturned telephone calls) and unclear explanations about the role of a mentor.

c. Training of Mentors and Mentees

There is consensus among mentoring practitioners that training of mentors is very necessary. Here, again, there is little that can be applied to all mentor programs. Flaxman, Ascher and Harrington (1988) noted that training programs appear to be driven by instinct and good common sense, rather than a sound knowledge base. "Training for the instrumental and psychological aspects of mentoring is usually mixed up, though it is not clear how the proportion relates to the proportion in the expected mentoring relationship." Training, they concluded, "is unlikely to turn someone who is unsuitable for mentoring into a good mentor, but it can be used as part of a selection process to weed out those who are unfit."

Mentoring practitioners in the Toronto area who met at the suggestion of the Metropolitan Toronto Learning Partnership were very aware of current inadequacies of mentoring training and support. It was noted that each mentoring program tends to develop all of its own support system and materials, and that no effective mechanism exists to facilitate sharing of training and support information. It was thought that common training programs would be much more efficient. (The Reichl Group, 1984).

Mentoring authorities also have noted that it is essential for mentors to have opportunities for support and feedback. Hamilton and Hamilton (1992) found that although the program they evaluated had a support system, even successful mentors "expressed frustration about the need for additional support beyond the initial orientation and training".

Freedman (1992) has cautioned that many believe mentoring to be an inexpensive and easy method of addressing inequities in the educational system; however, such views reckon without the great difficulty in program recruitment, the formation of relationships, and the maintenance of relationships. He holds that without the 'infrastructure' of program support, mentoring will be at best a marginal intervention.

d. Can Mentoring Have Negative Effects?

Despite the claim by *Enter Mentor* that "everyone benefits from successful mentorships: protégés, mentors, the educational system, and business" (Baran, 1992), there exists the

real possibility that mentoring may have negative results. Slicker and Palmer (1993) examined a mentoring program matching school personnel with at risk tenth grade students. Initial results indicated that there was no difference between mentored students and students in a matched control group. However, examination of mentor logs indicated that the quality of mentoring varied greatly. Further analysis based on reclassifying mentored students into "effectively mentored" and "ineffectively mentored" groups found that effectively mentored students experienced academic achievement surpassing the control group. Ineffectively mentored students showed a decline in academic achievement. One possible explanation for the decrement offered by the authors was "disappointment over non-fulfillment of their expectations of mentoring".

As Flaxman (1992) warns,

> Mentoring has a mystique that only good can come from it, that nothing can go wrong, that at worst the programs will not accomplish all that they could, but that the youth will at least be better for the experience even if they cannot say that it has markedly affected their lives. But mentoring can be harmful. It can disillusion both the mentor and the youth who might not enter into such a relationship again. It can make youth cynical about yet another program which promises more than it can deliver or is irrelevant to their lives. It can frustrate mentors who have difficulties in reaching the youth, and feel abandoned by the youth whom they are volunteering to help and by the program staff who do not provide sufficient support and guidance. And it can disillusion social planners if they feel that mentoring has been oversold as a youth development strategy.

e. The "Sobering Realities" of At Risk Students

The central challenge mentoring mentioned in all discussions of the literature is the challenge facing all intervention programs targeting at risk students. Research is far from comprehensive (and this paper can do no more than touch on the subject) but there is much evidence to suggest that dropping out is strongly influenced by socio-economic and psychological factors that can only be partly addressed by educational initiatives, regardless of how well designed and run.

Between a quarter and a third of Ontario students who start Grade 9 will drop out of school. However, this number is not distributed evenly across all groups. Research on Toronto Board students found that:

- students from lower socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to drop out than students from higher socio-economic backgrounds (for example, those from non-remunerative backgrounds were twice as likely to drop out as those from professional backgrounds);
- students living with one parent were twice as likely to drop out as those living with both parents;
- students in the General academic level are twice as likely to drop out than those in the Advanced academic level, and those in the Basic academic level were thrice as likely to drop out as those in the Advanced level;
- Black students were more likely to drop out than White or Asian students;
- Portuguese-speaking students were more likely to drop out than any other major language group;
- males were more likely to drop out than females.

Of course, many of these factors are related: for example, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be enrolled in Basic and General Level courses than students from higher socio-economic backgrounds (Yau et al., 1993; Brown, 1994).[13]

Other factors associated with at risk status include:

- higher mobility of students (the degree to which students transfer from one school to another);
- lower patterns of passing courses and accumulating credits;
- lower attendance;
- attitudes towards school;
- stress in school and outside of school (Brown, 1994; Brown, 1995a; Brown, 1995b; Turner, 1993; Morris et al., 1991; Sullivan, 1988; Karp, 1988).

Because these factors are so powerful and linked, any intervention program is going to have an uphill battle. After interviewing mentoring administrators and participants, Freedman (1992) has concluded that any mentoring initiative will face the "sobering reality" that while mentoring "addresses real and profound needs, these needs are often *so* profound that mentoring can seem, in the words of one mentor, like a 'drop in the bucket'". Flaxman, Ascher and Harrington (1988) caution that "the power of any planned mentoring program must be viewed in the larger social context in which it takes place. Mentors cannot pluck adolescents out of poor homes or disruptive communities. Mentoring is only effective insofar as it accommodates, transforms, vitiates, or expands the influence of family, school, community, or job."

f. Difficulties In Selecting At Risk Students

At risk students can be identified through different methods. One important measure of calculating at risk status is students' credit accumulation. Research on Toronto Board students found that how students did in their first year of high school (Grade 9) was pivotal to later academic success. Of students who successfully completed 8 credits in Grade 9, 79% had graduated by their fifth year; of students who successfully completed 6 credits in Grade 9, only 33% graduated; of those who completed 4 credits, 19% graduated (Brown, 1994). Yet most students who dropped out only did so in their fourth or fifth year of high school-- even though patterns of failure had been set much earlier. One reason for this is that, by the time a student has become identified as at risk, it is often difficult to 'turn' a student around.

An obvious alternative would be earlier identification and mentoring. In fact, several researchers have identified potential dropouts as early as third grade with 75-78% accuracy, using such criteria as parents' occupation and marital status, gender, ethnicity, achievement scores and marks, IQ, and discipline problems (Turner, 1993). However, there are difficulties. First, some have questioned the validity of identification of at risk students, noting that few processes have actually been rigorously validated, although there

[13] American patterns are similar but slightly different: Hispanics have a higher dropout rate than Blacks; males and females have similar dropout rates (although males had a higher dropout rate until the early part of the twentieth century). See Kelly, 1993.

are a number of promising on-going initiatives such as the study of East York elementary students (for research on the East York program see Sicoly, 1993). Secondly, many mentoring systems are designed for the secondary level. Adapting them to the elementary level would involve substantive modifications to program objectives and design.

Demonstrating results of mentoring programs-- as noted above, very difficult to do under the best of circumstances-- becomes even more problematic when dealing with elementary school students. In the Toronto Board cohort study of students from 1987 to 1992, most students dropped out after four to five years in secondary school. Thus a mentoring program working with Grade 4 students might not be able to clearly demonstrate results until nine or ten years after the initial intervention, although important indicators like attendance, marks, and course failures can be looked at after only a few years.

Most mentoring programs do not target the most at risk students. Project Success in Atlanta, for example, targets students with a "C" average; "D" average students were, presumably, too at risk to be considered (Glass, 1991). In the inner-city mentoring program profiled by Fehr (1993), middle school students with moderate rather than severe problems were selected. The program designer suggested that students most likely to benefit from a mentoring program were "students passing about half of his or her classes, whose behavior problems tend to result in detentions rather than suspension or expulsion from school, and who receives little support from home." He cautioned against attempting to establish a mentoring relationship with a student whose performance is below this line, suggesting that "such students' needs are rarely met by mentoring programs" (Fehr, 1993)[14].

Then there is the informal selection noted by Flaxman and Ascher (1992), which takes place when programs connect with the private sector: "since staff in many programs believe that an important side effect of having mentoring programs is creating support for the schools, they have to be particularly careful to select mentees who will act as ambassadors for the schools". Flaxman and Ascher also found that students being selected for mentoring relationships tended to be those who it was thought would have the best chance of succeeding. A central reality of mentoring programs of any sort is that there are always more potential mentees than there are mentors; and resources have to be allocated accordingly.

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[14] Selecting at risk students has other difficulties. 1) Numbers versus proportion: for example, in the Toronto Board the highest *number* of dropouts are in the Advanced level (in which over three quarters of Toronto students belong), although the *proportion* of dropouts in the General and Basic levels are much higher (Brown, 1993). Programs for at risk students often target students where the *proportion* of dropouts is high (e.g. many American mentoring programs for at risk students are for Black or Hispanic students in inner city schools). 2) Since at risk criteria can be defined in different ways (any or a combination of socio-demographic characteristics, credit accumulation, marks, attendance, truancy, discipline problems, standardized test achievement, geographic locations such as inner-city schools) different criteria will select different at risk students.

g. The Organization of Mentoring Programs for At Risk Students

Flaxman and Ascher's study of New York City mentoring programs (Flaxman and Ascher, 1992) provides a picture of how mentoring programs are organized. Models of educational curriculum planning (like the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training's Curriculum Review, Development and Implementation Cycle, or CRDI) usually suggest that any new education program have an assessment of needs, a detailed development phase, and a final implementation phase.[15] Instead, most New York programs appear to have been quickly established in response to funding availability and political demand. Most programs were younger than two years old at the time of the study.

New York City programs had insufficient staff, although there was great variation in staff size. Funding was very unreliable, and as a result took up much of staff time. Between funding difficulties, and co-ordination of all the different groups that would fund and interact with the programs, "the difficulty of collaboration among corporations, agencies, community organizations, and schools can loom over the mentoring it is supposed to enable, overshadowing for staff the problems of working out fragile mentoring relationships." Some mentoring programs were outside agencies working with schools, while others were school-based.

In both cases, mentoring programs were "add-ons" in the educational system; "mentoring has generally been an institutional guest, accommodating itself to bureaucracies and fitting into other people's schedules". Regardless of whether programs were school-based or from outside schools, there was always great difficulty in coordinating mentoring with other student programs. Programs rarely evaluated themselves because of scarce resources. (Flaxman and Ascher, 1992). A situation further from the CRDI model of curriculum planning is difficult to imagine.

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[15] The Curriculum Review, Development and Implementation Cycle (CRDI) appears to be closely based on what is commonly called the "Tyler model" of curriculum. According to the Ministry document outlining it, CRDI

> is a fundamental yet dynamic concept in curriculum activity. Each segment of the cycle is connected to the others: among them a synergism develops which results in a process designed to bring improved education to the classroom and the students.
>
> The **review** phase of the cycle involves the systematic gathering, analysis, and interpretation of data concerned with the quality of school programs and student achievement, and is used in making decisions that will facilitate progress towards the achievement of educational goals. The **development** phase involves the creation and updating of programs in the light of societal and student needs and thus results in new or refined policies, programs, and guidelines. The **implementation** phase involves the translation of policies and intended programs into classroom practice and actual learning experiences. Findings from the review phase usually lead to development activities, but can also quite naturally lead to the revision of implementation initiatives. (Ministry of Education, 1988).

In Ontario, while the situation is not as chaotic, there appears to be limited curriculum planning and documents at the provincial level.[16], and mentoring programs seem to lack integration into Ontario ministry guidelines. For example, the Change Your Future program has been funded by the Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat, the Ministry of Education and Training, and twelve participating Boards, and is administered through the Anti-Racism Secretariat. It involves students and paid staff on school property during school time. Yet it had not been referenced or guided by central curriculum documentation or mandate.[17] This appears to have its advantages as well as disadvantages. Each Board organizes and directs the program in its own way, allowing it to be adapted to specific city, school and student environments. Furthermore, the program has evolved over the years in ways that may have been difficult under a stringent mandate. (For example, the mentoring aspects of Change Your Future were not as prominent when the program started in Fall of 1991). Still, future funding has been uncertain for each of the four years Change Your Future has been in operation; program planning has therefore been done one year at a time.[18]

The disassociated and vulnerable state of mentoring programs that had been documented in New York City program by Flaxman and Ascher, was also a key concern among Toronto practitioners in the August 1994 meeting hosted by The Metropolitan Toronto Learning Partnership. The primary concern was funding and, as a result, program continuity. "Today program directors spend an inordinate amount of time and effort obtaining funding for their programs, mostly at the expense of maintaining program quality and personal quality of life".

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[16] Teacher Advocacy programs (TAP), also called Teacher Advisor programs (TA), are part of the Ministry of Education and Training's Transition Years (Grade 7-9) mandate. Although programs are sometimes referred to as 'advocacy/mentoring programs' they have not been examined here, because it is clear that their direction, while related to mentoring programs in many ways, are dissimilar enough to require examination in their own right. TAP programs are fundamental to the transition between elementary and secondary school, and originated because "at this stage in a students' development that there is a need for at least one stable relationship in less personalized environment" (Espe, 1993). The similarities as well as differences between TAP and mentoring programs can be seen in this description of advisory programs by Ziegler and Mulhill (1994): "Advisory programs bring together an adult, usually a teacher, acting in an advisory capacity, with a group of students, usually varying in size from 10 to 15. The students may represent a range of ages, and the advisory group, which meets at least weekly, may change its composition annually, or may include students for the duration of their years at the school. It is common for a middle school advisory program to include students across the three years of the school program, and to keep students with the same peers and advisor over the three year period. The function of the groups is to promote students' educational, personal, and social development, and the curriculum is often described as a guidance one, emphasizing the issues of personal and social importance to students, including gender issues, career concerns, and problem-solving and conflict mediation strategies, among others." See also Ziegler, 1993, for a discussion of research on advisory/groups.

[17] Resources are now being developed through the Anti-Racism Secretariat, including a *CYF Resource Guide*, and a guide for job-shadowing; these are currently in draft form.

[18] Unless otherwise noted, information about the organization of Change Your Future is from the author's personal experience, through his association with the programs. As well, the author was present at the August 1994 meeting of mentoring practitioners hosted by the Learning Partnership.

Practitioners held that, because of a lack of shared information and training resources, they were constantly having to 'reinvent the wheel' and, due to lack of financial resources and long-term stability, were unable to engage in more than minimal evaluation and planning. (The Reichl Group, 1994, supplemented by authors' notes.)

Conclusion

Mentoring at risk students is an example of what Eisner calls the "social adaptation" orientation to the curriculum, where the mission of schools is "to locate social needs, or at least to be sensitive to those needs, and to provide the kinds of programs that are relevant for meeting the needs that have been identified" (Eisner, 1979).

However, the realities of implementing mentoring programs are not so clear cut. The programs that use the term "mentoring" have so many objectives and involve so many different types of pairings that the term may be too general for applicable use; indeed, referring to all these programs as 'mentoring' may be harmful in that educators may think they are talking about the same type of program when in fact they are referring to very different ones.

Many educators have great enthusiasm about mentoring, and mentoring has produced memorable successes. However, the link between mentoring program and results, while promising, has not been definitely shown by available research. This may be because there are so many types of pairing strategies, and present research is so limited, that it is difficult to derive any sort conclusion on what works and what does not. Also, mentoring (of whatever variety) is rarely a stand-alone 'program' but is normally one component of a multiple intervention strategy. As a result, it is difficult to conclude from the current literature which types of pairings work best, and what are the optimal conditions for program success.

Implementation of planned mentoring, in trying to replicate the 'magic' of natural relationships, often runs into logistical snags. Successful programs therefore require staff (whether volunteer, paid, or both), to provide the organizational structure needed to organize, and then maintain, pairings. Even under optimal conditions, the lack of social or emotional compatibility may prevent pairings from developing beyond rudimentary stages: all in all, research indicates that half or more of pairings never work. The programs often exist in a sort of administrative limbo and can be financially fragile.

It is possible to see in more recent writings a modification on what mentorship is thought to be, what a 'second generation' of mentoring programs may look like. In contrast to earlier (perhaps unrealistic) expectations, those who have done detailed work on the subject have cautioned that mentoring of at risk students should be thought as *modest* interventions, given the organizational challenges of programs, and the imposing challenge of social forces at work in students' lives. Also, given the limitations of matching mentors and mentees, some practitioners and researchers have re-examined the ideal of one mentor matched to one mentee. For example, in Freedman's idea of 'mentor-rich environments', the opportunity is provided for students and adults to establish mentoring ties: a formal matching is replaced by the facilitation of the natural mentoring process. Since such systems are only now being set up in the Kansas City school system, as well as in several Toronto jurisdictions, preliminary results will not be available for several years.

It is a tribute to the attraction of mentoring programs that even researchers with substantial reservations will urge that the programs continue. Hamilton and Hamilton (1992) warn that "mentoring programs are intended to synthesize a natural human process that has undeniable power....However, the 'natural' way for this to happen is that an adult and a youth gradually

become close through contact in their daily lives. It is not clear that a program can replicate this process". Nonetheless, they conclude that even given its current limitations, mentoring is worthwhile.

> There is something wonderful and powerful about the relationships that can develop between a caring adult and a young person. We have no doubt that what the best mentors did with their protégés was beneficial to both. Our goal should be to maximize the number of mentors who can do such things and to match them with the young people who most need their challenge and support (Hamilton and Hamilton, 1992).

Perhaps because the apparent simplicity of the concept of 'mentoring' disguises the enormous complexity of its application, a great deal needs be to be done before we can begin to see the "true picture". At this time, formal mentoring of at-risk students is a concept of enormous potential, but much of the potential is as yet unrealized.

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Appendix: Mentor and Telemachus– the "Origins" of Mentoring

Many discussions of mentoring start off with the story of Mentor and Telemachus, from Homer's *The Odyssey*. (e.g. Freedman, 1992; Fear, 1993; Greer, 1993; Haensly and Parson, 1993.) To quote one example,

> The origin of the term *mentor* is found in Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey* , wherein Odysseus gave the responsibility of nurturing his son Telemachus to his loyal friend Mentor. Odysseus ventured off to fight the Trojan War while Mentor stayed behind to educate Telemachus. This education was not confined to the martial arts but was comprehensive in that it included every facet of Telemachus' life. The relationship between Mentor and Telemachus was not without difficulties. Mentor had the challenge of making Telemachus aware of the mistakes he made without having Telemachus become rebellious. Indeed, one of Mentor's goals was to guide Telemachus so as to help him learn from his own errors in judgment. Anderson and Shannon conclude from *The Odyssey* that modeling a standard and style of behavior is a central quality of mentoring and that mentoring is intentional, nurturing, insightful, and supportive. (Odell, 1990.)

What is especially interesting about this description is that virtually none of it can be found in its supposed source, *The Odyssey*. One would go to *The Odyssey* in vain to search for examples of Mentor teaching Telemachus the arts of war, or of providing "nurturing, insightful, and supportive" guidance, or a "special case of shared learning" (Haensly and Parsons, 1993). In fact, Mentor appears only twice in *The Odyssey*, and speaks only once, making a minor speech during a banquet at the beginning of the story[19]. He had not been charged with educating or nurturing Telemachus, but "had been left in charge of everything with full authority over the servants", more of a house steward than a teacher (*The Odyssey*, Book II).

In *The Odyssey*, Mentor's true importance was as a disguise for the goddess Minerva, who used her divine powers to assist Odysseus to return to his home on the island of Ithaca (Odysseus had suffered numerous travails after the Trojan Wars and been given up for lost). Minerva in fact disguised herself as several people during the course of *The Odyssey*: Menes, King of the Taphians (a friend of Odysseus), Telemachus' aunt, Ipthime, and Telemachus himself. The disguises of Menes and Mentor were to motivate Telemachus to collect a ship of warriors together and leave Ithaca to search for Odysseus: this more or less gets the plot of *The Odyssey* rolling. In other words, the disguise of Minerva as Mentor was intended not to install learning and wisdom, but as a plot device. Having done this, Minerva , "flew away in the form of an eagle, and all marveled as they beheld it." Minerva changing into a bird from whatever disguise she had assumed was used throughout *The Odyssey* to illustrate to other characters (and to the reader) that Odysseus or Telemachus is being helped by divine intervention.[20] This is closer to the original definition of mentor as "protector", and explains the origin of the term.

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[19] Mentor's second appearance is in Book XVII, towards the end of the *The Odyssey*, when Telemachus sits down with Mentor and two of Odysseus's old friends. Mentor does not say or do anything in this appearance.

[20] Minerva changed into a bird three times in *The Odyssey*, twice while disguised as Mentor. The reaction of one character (King Nestor, husband of Helen of Troy), was to take Telemachus by the hand. "My friend", said he, "I see that you are going to be a great hero some day, since the gods wait upon you thus while you are still so young". *The Odyssey*, Book III.

The type of "learning outcome" espoused by *The Odyssey* may not exactly be that espoused by modern mentors and mentees. Telemachus does become a true Bronze Age warrior: the wording of Homer makes it clear that he is intended to be admired. At the conclusion of *The Odyssey*, Telemachus assists his father in returning to his home, and (with the help of Minerva) slaughtering the other warriors who have been living off the court in Odysseus' absence. After the battle, Telemachus turns his attention to the women of the court, who had been collaborating with the now deceased warriors. He states that

> "I shall not let these women die a clean death, for they were insolent to me and my mother, and used to sleep with the suitors[21]".
>
> So saying he made a ship's cable fast to one of the bearing-posts that supported the roof of the domed room, and secured it all around the building, at a good height, lest any of the women's feet should touch the ground; and as thrushes or doves beat against a net that has been set for them in a thicket just as they were getting to their nest, and a terrible fate awaits them, even so did the women have to put their heads in nooses one after the other and die most miserably. Their feet moved convulsively for a while, but not for very long. (*The Odyssey*, Book XX.)

This may be a happy ending in Bronze Age terms, but the "standard and style of behavior" is probably not what would be considered appropriate for modern mentoring relationships.

Without wishing to further belabor the point, it seems obvious that the relationship of Mentor and Telemachus is not even remotely the prototype of modern mentoring relationships.[22] The attempt to use such an inappropriate literary example from antiquity may be partly explained as an attempt to provide historical continuity to something that is in fact a fairly recent innovation.[23]

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[21]Most of the warriors staying at the court were suitors to Odysseus' supposed widow, Penelope.

[22] Some mentoring reviews point to the medieval apprenticeship program as one of the origins of modern mentoring programs (see Monaghan, 1992). There may be something to this, in that the relationship of university tutor or advisor, which often serves as the basis for natural mentoring relationships, had similar medieval origins to apprenticeships. However, to read an ancestry of modern mentoring programs into the apprenticeship structure is to misinterpret modern historical scholarship on the subject. Apprenticeship was a very structured process that had specific learning outcomes for crafts such as, say, goldsmithery. It was also an economic monopoly, and to modern Western eyes an unjust monopoly, controlled by the guild masters to ensure their own prosperity, and that of their families. It was difficult for apprentices without the right social connections to move from apprentice to journeyman, and then to master. This sometimes resulted in riots of journeymen and apprentices against masters. (See Darnton, 1985, for an interesting essay on this.) Inequities in the medieval apprenticeship system thus had much in common with the perceived inequities in the modern educational systems that mentoring of at risk students tries to address.

[23] The extensive reference to *The Odyssey* by scholars who have interpreted Homer very broadly may be worth studying in its own right. The earliest source for such references (at least, as located by the author) appeared in 1976 (Boston, 1976).